MINISTRY OF
HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

COUNCILS AND THEIR HOUSES

Management of Estates

Eighth Report
of the Housing Management Sub-Committee
of the
Central Housing Advisory Committee

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TERMS OF REFERENCE

We were appointed by the Central Housing Advisory Committee in June, 1957, "to review the present arrangements for the management of the housing estates of local authorities and in particular the functions of housing managers, and to make recommendations".

MEMBERSHIP

In order to secure a wider representation of local authority housing experience, we invited Dr. R. Bradbury, the City Architect and Director of Housing, Liverpool, and Mr. F. H. M. Sargent, at that time Clerk to the Pewsey Rural District Council and now Clerk to the South Cambridgeshire Rural District Council, to serve as co-opted members.

Because of ill-health, Alderman A. F. Bradbeer felt obliged to resign as Chairman after our second meeting. The Dowager Marchioness of Reading was appointed Chairman in his place. We were glad however to have the benefit of Alderman Bradbeer's knowledge and experience when he was able, on his recovery, to resume as a member.

EVIDENCE

A press notice was issued inviting any individuals or organisations who wished to do so to send in their views. By means of a questionnaire, detailed information was obtained from 54 local authorities broadly representative of the different parts of the country. They included authorities of different sizes and status covering various types of towns and districts. Similar information was obtained from the Development Corporations of three New Towns. During the course of the inquiry visits were paid to a few authorities to gain an impression at first hand of different methods of management in areas of varying size and character. These were selected from the authorities who replied to the questionnaire. Groups of members visited the County Boroughs of Leeds, Huddersfield and Worcester, the Municipal Boroughs of Bedford and Wednesbury, the Urban District of Trowbridge and the Rural Districts of Gloucester and Wellington (Salop.).

In addition the views of other interested organisations, whose experience was thought to be particularly important, were sought. The written evidence thus received was supplemented by oral evidence from several of these organisations. As we were anxious to obtain, as far as was reasonably possible, the views of tenants themselves, we interviewed some representatives of tenants' community groups and associations. We also had the advantage of being able to study a sample survey carried out on our behalf by Professor D. C. Marsh and Dr. A. R. Emerson, of the Department of Social Science, University of Nottingham, to discover the views of tenants living on the estates of the Beeston and Stapleford Urban District Council.

We wish to express our indebtedness to all those who supplied information. The help and co-operation so readily given was of the greatest value. We wish also to thank those local authorities whom we visited for their willingness to grant us facilities.

A complete list of those who gave written or oral evidence will be found in the Appendix to this report.

INTRODUCTION

1. The character of the nation is profoundly influenced by the homes of its people. Whilst contentment in the home depends upon the wide range of factors involved in satisfactory human relationships, the adequacy of the dwelling and the way it is looked after both play an important part in providing the proper conditions for successful homemaking. Now that about one quarter of the population of England and Wales are living in the three and a quarter million dwellings owned by local authorities, we regard the proper management of municipal housing estates as a contribution of great importance to national well-being.

2. In 1938 the Ministry of Health, the Ministry then responsible for housing, published a report by the Central Housing Advisory Committee on "The Management of Municipal Housing Estates".* This report contains a great deal of material which is still relevant. But it was written twenty years ago, and the many social and economic changes in the life of the nation which have occurred since its publication could not have been foreseen. These changes have been accelerated by the second world war and have resulted in the community now accepting increased responsibilities. In addition there have been great advances in design, both of individual dwellings and estates, due to increased interest in and study of all aspects of housing; there have also been modifications and improvements, resulting from technological advances, in the construction, fitting-out and servicing of dwellings.

3. In view of the many changes which have taken place since 1938, we believe that the interests of housing would be best served by approaching afresh the whole subject of housing management. While, therefore, accepting from the 1938 report what is still applicable, we have sought to produce a new and comprehensive report related to conditions as they are today, or which are likely to emerge in the future.

4. *We believe it is necessary at the outset to emphasise that local authority houses and flats represent a considerable part of the nation's wealth, and that it is the responsibility of local authorities to treat their management as an important business enterprise which must be conducted with due attention to the financial, as well as to personal aspects.* The houses must be well looked after, fairly rented, and economically managed. An adequate system of costing is as essential to good housing management as to any other business undertaking, so that the houses do not become a burden instead of an asset to the community.

5. Local authorities in their approach to housing management need to take account of changed and changing social and economic conditions. Their contribution to a solution of the national housing problem cannot be regarded as satisfactory until each authority is able to meet the needs of those for whom they provide accommodation with dwellings of the right type, in the right area, at rentals which the intended occupants can reasonably be expected to pay.

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* The Management of Municipal Housing Estates: Report of the House Management and Housing Associations Sub-Committee: H.M.S.O., reprinted 1945. Price 9d. net.

5 AP

6. In 1938 the country was still suffering from the effects of the depression, and the tenants provided with accommodation by local authorities were, in the main, persons in the lower income groups. The Committee which reported in 1938 was therefore concerned with municipal housing essentially as a social service, and devoted a great deal of attention to the problem of ensuring that tenants of very limited means could make reasonable use of a council house. During the war, plans were drawn up for ensuring that in the post-war world the relative poverty of the 1930's would not again become widespread, and social services were designed to ensure improvements in standards of living for all. The State accepted that henceforth a high and steady level of employment should be a basic principle of national policy, that a wide system of social security should ensure at least a minimum standard of living, and that equality of opportunity should be provided through, for example, a national system of education and a national health service.

7. Since the war these policies have been pursued and today the great majority of the population enjoy standards of living much superior to those of even twenty years ago. Furthermore the housing responsibilities of local authorities are no longer restricted to what used to be termed "the working classes". As a result, tenants today are much more representative of the community as a whole and are, for the most part, independent, reliable citizens who no longer require the support and guidance which was often thought to be necessary in the past. *Local authorities must recognise that this is a major social change which is likely to become more marked in the years ahead: and that this recognition must be given positive effect in their management practice. Though the basic functions of management remain the same, methods must be continuously adjusted to keep ahead of changing conditions.* It is this which constitutes the present challenge to all those engaged in housing management.

8. To think of the tenants of today as though their circumstances and needs are the same as those of tenants of a generation ago would be unreal. Similarly, to expect methods of management designed to meet the needs of tenants in the 1930's to be suitable for those of the 1950's or 1970's would, we think, be quite wrong. It is for these and other reasons that we have thought it necessary to lay so much emphasis, in our report, on the changes which have already occurred, and we have been concerned to assess the implications of this rapid transition not only in the light of today's conditions but also looking always to the future.

9. The great increase in the scale of municipal housing affects management quantitatively as well as qualitatively. Estates vary in size from a few houses in villages scattered over rural areas to estates which are the equivalent of new townships, housing several thousand families. Recent years have also seen more building in multi-storey flats, which in themselves present new problems of management. The renewed drive to clear the slums means that building on a large scale is likely to continue for some years. But houses and flats alone cannot ensure the creation of contented communities: while for people rehoused from the slums, a new house may not by itself be enough to ensure contentment in new surroundings. On the larger estates many additional facilities such as shops, schools, libraries, churches, public houses, meeting places, parks and playgrounds, are needed. Authorities have, therefore, the complex task of creating and maintaining, in partnership with statutory, commercial and voluntary agencies, the environment and the conditions in which the life of a new community can flourish.

10. *We attach great importance to the essential part which the elected members play, not only in all that concerns the provision of houses, but in ensuring that management is*

equal to its extended responsibilities. Unless they make themselves fully conversant with the requirements of management and have a real and human understanding of their functions as landlords, the housing management staff, no matter how enthusiastic and expert they may be, will not be able to discharge effectively their full responsibility.

11. There is no one system of management which could ever be universally the best, because no two local authorities are exactly alike, and the tenants differ widely. Whatever the form of management the test should be whether it is both working well and is seen to be so by the community at large. This means that the arrangements should be sufficiently flexible to meet changing conditions, and should be examined critically from time to time to see that they continue to do so.

CHAPTER I

Scope of Management

12. Our terms of reference required the study of housing management and the work of housing managers. Before the work of management can begin, the council as a whole must take decisions and agree on action in the whole field of housing policy. The council will act in this matter on the recommendation of the housing committee, who in their turn look for advice to officers of the council who are experts in various aspects of the work. At this stage the planner and the architect are immediately concerned, together with the clerk, the treasurer, and the medical officer of health. We are here concerned with these wider activities in the field of housing only to emphasise that what is done at the planning and design stages must affect housing management fundamentally throughout the life of the estate. *For this reason it is of great importance that the housing manager be brought in from the outset as one of the design team*, and a chapter has been devoted to the important relationship between the layout of the estates and the design of the houses and their subsequent management.

13. The rest of the report deals with what happens on a housing estate after the planner, the architect and the builder have finished their work and management begins. The basic elements of management, whether of a large estate or of a single house, whether by a private or a municipal landlord, are letting, rent collection and maintenance. Today, where estates are large, and where many may include blocks of flats, maintenance must extend beyond the dwelling to its environment.

14. Wide powers of management are conferred upon local authorities by Sections 111 to 113 of the Housing Act, 1957: they have the sole responsibility for the management and control of the houses in their ownership. Specific mention is made in the Act of the right of inspection and of the control of sub-letting, as well as the fixing of rents and granting rebates. Some restriction on the freedom of choice of tenant is imposed by the requirement that a reasonable preference shall be given to those who live in insanitary or overcrowded houses, who have large families, or who live in unsatisfactory housing conditions. Apart from this, and the duty of reviewing rents periodically and altering them as circumstances may require, local authorities have complete freedom to manage their estates as they think best. This freedom carries with it a corresponding responsibility to ensure that the management provided is equal to all reasonable demands made upon it. Local authorities

are by far the largest landlords in the country and must, by the excellence of their management, prove themselves among the most enlightened.

15. Management extends beyond the care of the houses themselves. Many estates include at least a small group of shops; the larger estates require a considerable range of additional buildings and facilities, all of which must be equally well maintained. The layout of modern estates makes greater use of landscaping than was usual in the past, and estate management now normally includes a responsibility for the maintenance of lawns, flower beds, shrubberies and trees, as well as of playgrounds and parking spaces. *The term housing management must be used in a sense wide enough to cover the care and well-being of an estate as a whole.*

16. In letting their houses, a local authority has a general duty to accommodate those families in greatest need. This may necessitate a selection from applicants on the waiting list, or discharging a statutory obligation to rehouse certain families. In the former case, an assessment of housing need must be made to determine priority; this requires an investigation by visit of the applicant's existing housing conditions. In either case, the right type of accommodation should be available. To secure this not only must there be careful planning of the authority's own building programme, but the accommodation in their existing houses must be kept under review so that the best use can be made of all available accommodation through transfers and exchanges.

17. Local authorities have freedom to fix the rents of council houses, but they are required to review them periodically and to alter them as circumstances may require. In settling their general rent policy, local authorities must decide in particular how the subsidies received from the Exchequer are to be applied for the benefit of tenants, whether any additional subsidy should be contributed from the rates, and whether rents are to be related to the income of individual tenants. They also have to determine the amount to be allocated to the repairs fund and to keep under review the cost of management. In considering these matters the experience of the elected members themselves, as well as their knowledge of the district and of the earning capacity of the tenants employed in local industries, is of great value. They have the advice of their clerks and financial officers, but they may also need information from those officers more closely in touch with the day-to-day business of management, about the condition of the existing dwellings, the value attached to them by the tenants, and the capacity of tenants to pay the rents proposed.

18. The collection of the rents, whatever the method adopted, is important as the financial transaction between landlord and tenant; it is a major point of contact between the two. The organisation of collection should be so devised as to be economical for the landlord and convenient for the tenant.

19. The care of the estates comprises all that is concerned in maintaining the efficiency and convenience of the dwellings themselves and the related services. It includes the programming of all periodic maintenance work, the supervision and execution of all day-to-day works of repairs and maintenance, and the modernisation of older houses and flats.

20. Management covers a variety of activities which arise from the occupation of houses and fall to be dealt with by the local authority as landlord. These include matters arising from the conditions of tenancy, neglect of house or garden, serious friction between tenants, transfers and exchanges, applications by tenants to make alterations or to erect outbuildings; and the giving of information about local social services to tenants who need it. Matters of this kind are bound to arise in the day-to-day management of housing estates. If estates are to be well run and tenants con-

tented, the local authority must accept responsibility for such things, while at the same time bearing in mind that there should be no unnecessary interference with the tenants.

CHAPTER 2

Administration

Committee Arrangements

21. Housing estate management is but one of the various functions carried out by local authorities, and it has to be fitted into the pattern of general administration best suited to local needs. These vary from one district to another, and in consequence a wide variety of committee and sub-committee arrangements exists for dealing with the provision of housing and the subsequent management of estates.

22. It is on the effectiveness of these committee arrangements that the success of management largely depends. Because the elected members of local authorities are responsible for determining policy and ensuring its execution, it is important that they keep in close touch with housing administration, not only to enable them to fulfil their responsibilities to the electorate, but also to ensure that full use is made of their personal knowledge of the needs of tenants. The methods used by committees to control the administration, as well as the determination of the kind of matters they themselves will deal with, are of prime importance. *We urge all housing authorities to keep their committee arrangements under review, and to satisfy themselves that they are so devised as to ensure smooth and efficient administration.*

23. While we have not examined committee structures in detail *we are convinced that management should be the responsibility of a major committee. We are also convinced that, with the possible exception of the largest authorities, there are advantages in bringing both the building and the management of housing estates under the care of the same committee.* At the same time it is recognised that this committee would be subject to any overriding functions of other committees, such as finance and establishments.

24. Housing affairs are closely inter-related: and if building and management are placed under the care of entirely separate committees, those responsible for new building may lose the benefit of the experience gained from the management of older estates. Conversely, the experience of those concerned with management will be wasted if the management staff have no influence on matters which crucially affect their future work.

25. We appreciate the importance of not over-burdening a main housing committee with matters of detail which might tend to be relegated to the end of a long agenda, and so fail to receive the attention they deserve. All matters of broad policy should be dealt with by the main committee, which should exercise responsibility over the whole field of management. In contrast, matters such as the allocation of houses, and questions affecting individual tenancies, can fittingly be dealt with by one or more sub-committees. Committees should be able to keep in touch with matters delegated to the housing manager by means of reports at regular intervals; they should also have the benefit of advice from other officers whenever it is appropriate.

26. It is the responsibility of the main committee to decide on departmental arrangements for management; to keep the efficiency of those arrangements under

review, and to alter them as required. *The committee must watch not only the pattern of its administration but also its costs.* The price of management will affect both the rent the tenant pays and, in those areas in which a rate subsidy is being paid, the amount the general body of rate payers are called upon to pay towards the cost of housing.

Departmental Organisation

27. There is a variety of administrative arrangements for management in force at the present time. These have arisen in a number of ways, and have doubtless been influenced by tradition or local circumstances, as well as by the personalities of those most closely concerned. It was probably the early practice of most authorities to distribute the duties of management among those officials whose qualifications were most appropriate for the work. Thus the clerk commonly dealt with lettings and tenancy matters, the treasurer with rent collection, and the engineer or surveyor with maintenance. As the number of houses owned by an authority increased, the burden of management came to take up too much of the time of officials whose principal responsibilities lay elsewhere, and some duties were delegated to a housing officer who relieved his senior of some aspects of the work without acquiring more than limited responsibility himself. At a further stage in development, the advantage of bringing together most or all of the work involved in housing management led to the appointment of a housing manager, and ultimately, in many cases, to the establishment of a separate housing department. The stage at which this happened, or whether it happened at all, depended not only on the number of dwellings owned, whether they were centralised or scattered, houses or flats, but on the views of elected members and on the amount of interest taken in the details of management by one or other of the chief officers directly concerned.

28. The evidence submitted to us shows that there are four main types of organisation:

(a) A housing manager in charge of a separate department, directly responsible to the housing committee for all or most aspects of management.

(b) A housing manager in charge of a separate section of a department, responsible under the control of another officer for all or most aspects of management.

(c) A housing manager not in charge of a separate department or section of a department, and responsible under another officer for part of the work only.

(d) No housing manager, but each of the chief officers dealing separately with that part of management most closely related to his principal function.

29. The following table shows the administrative arrangements made by the 54 local authorities and the 3 New Town Development Corporations who replied to a questionnaire sent to them:

TABLE I

(a) Housing Manager in charge of a separate department	(b) Housing Manager in charge of a section of a department under another officer	(c) Housing Manager but no separate department or section	(d) No Housing Manager	Total
27	11	8	11	57

30. The 46 authorities having housing managers have made these officers responsible for a varied combination of functions. Their duties are shown in the table below:

TABLE II

Applications	Allocations	Rent Collection	Ordering Repairs	Executing Repairs	Supervision of Estates	Housing Welfare
45	43	30	36	18*	45	42

* included in the 36 ordering repairs

Table II shows that the housing managers in this sample, almost without exception, are required to deal with applications and lettings, general estate supervision and housing welfare, and that 36 out of 46 are responsible for the ordering of repairs. The function least often devolving on housing managers in this sample is the execution of repairs; although 36 order repair work to be done only 18 of these are also responsible for carrying it out. The tendency revealed in this table is evidently to bring together under a housing manager as many as possible of those functions of management which involve the closest contacts with the tenants.

31. One explanation of the varieties of practice which exist may be that the same arrangements are not suitable for all authorities. What is appropriate for a council owning several thousand houses is not necessarily appropriate for one owning a few hundred houses. Also relevant is the extent to which officers, whose main duties lie elsewhere, have either the time or the qualifications to undertake one or more of the functions of management.

32. The evidence has been examined to see the extent to which the views of the bodies and organisations concerned in varying ways with management confirm the position shown in Table II. We have also borne in mind one of the recommendations made in Circular 1740, sent to local authorities by the then Minister of Health with the report of 1938 on "The Management of Municipal Housing Estates", and the fact that this recommendation was endorsed in the report on "Housing Management"* issued in 1945. This recommendation was that, so far as practicable, the functions which bring the local authority as landlord and the tenants into association should be concentrated in the hands of one person.

33. The majority of those submitting evidence put forward arguments in favour of the principle of a separate department, with responsibility for all the functions of management, under the direction of one person having the requisite qualifications and ability. The main basis of their argument is that the various activities involved in the care of an estate are closely interdependent, and that only with full co-ordination under a single head can the best results be achieved, and overlapping, duplication or neglect of detail be avoided. A second argument is that the tenant has one main link with the landlord, and that responsibility for all matters arising from a tenancy, from the time an applicant first applies for admission to the waiting list until the time he ceases to occupy a council house, rests in one department. The case put forward against a single department rests on the argument that for local authorities who do not have a large number of houses, the amount of work is insufficient to justify a separate staff, and that it is more economical to divide the

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* Housing Management: Second Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee: H.M.S.O. 1945. Price 9d. net.

management duties among other officers experienced in their various fields, relying upon good co-operation to achieve satisfactory results.

34. We have carefully weighed the evidence before us, and supplemented it by a number of visits to local authorities with different systems of management. We do not think it either possible or desirable to formulate for general adoption any one pattern of management. *We recognise, however, the manifest advantages of bringing the various functions of management under a single department. At the same time, we are aware that there are authorities who have achieved efficient and well co-ordinated management without carrying out complete unification. We suggest to such authorities that they should carefully examine their housing management arrangements from time to time, in order to make sure their existing methods do, in fact, secure those benefits which we see in unification in a single department.*

35. Those local authorities who do not find it practicable to set up a single department or section to deal with all the functions involved in the day-to-day administration of their estates will need to consider the most suitable grouping of the functions described in Chapter 1. It would seem that certain functions run naturally together, and from this point of view, we regard the duties of management as falling into two main divisions, 'personal' and 'structural'. We do not regard it as practicable to divide the duties of management further so as to include a separate 'financial' division. Underlying all the duties of management are financial considerations which must apply to the work as a whole.

36. The 'personal' functions are those which primarily involve people; the 'structural' are those which are mainly concerned with buildings. Thus, the 'personal' group includes the investigation of applications and the assessment of housing need, lettings, transfers and exchanges; the collection of rents; receiving requests for repairs; dealing with tenancy problems generally. The 'structural' functions cover the execution of repairs and maintenance of dwellings and other buildings under the care of the housing department, and any other general maintenance work on the estates which does not come within the scope of other departments, e.g. parks or highways. *If there is to be a division of functions there would seem to be a good deal to be said for dividing them along these lines.* Such an arrangement would make the housing manager responsible for all those matters which bring the landlord and tenant into association, while leaving to the council's engineer or surveyor the task of maintenance of the estates. This division has the advantage of making full use of the technical knowledge of the engineer or surveyor, and avoiding the duplication of works departments, while leaving the housing manager as the primary link with the tenant.

37. *Any division of functions must, however, if it is to work satisfactorily, be clearly defined and must be accompanied by close and effective co-operation between the departments concerned.* The more people there are who are involved in the various duties of management, the more important it is to ensure proper co-ordination. Unless there is close co-operation at all levels, decisions may be made and action taken based on incomplete knowledge, or a tenant may be given conflicting information from two sources. *We regard it as essential that wherever the functions of management are divided between departments, there should be one committee which will ensure that the necessary departmental co-ordination does in fact take place.*

Offices on Estates

38. Easy communication between the landlord and tenant is important to both. What every tenant wants is to be able to get in touch with his landlord quickly when

need be, and to know that in all matters connected with his tenancy he has easy access to someone who can speak with authority on the landlord's behalf. When housing estates lie a long way from the offices of the housing department, this access becomes less easy, and the cost of management is increased by time and transport involved in travel to the estates.

39. A number of authorities have established offices on their larger estates, and in some cases a measure of decentralisation has been introduced. In the case of some of the larger authorities, the office operates as a local branch of the housing department, with an area housing manager responsible for rent collection, investigation, ordering and possibly executing repairs, and dealing with all tenants' enquiries. Where another department is responsible for the execution of repairs, the office may be near a local maintenance depot and work in conjunction with it. In some cases, an estate office may be open only on certain days or at certain times. A further arrangement has been introduced by some large authorities who have appointed resident estate officers. This may apply to selected estates only, or the estates may be grouped into districts, each district having its resident housing manager working from an estate office.

40. *There is much to be said for some measure of decentralisation of management through local offices in the case of authorities owning a number of large estates.* The increasing size of many estates has made contact between landlord and tenant more difficult. Other changes, such as the collection of rents at fortnightly or longer intervals, are likely to make it more important that an office should be available locally for the convenience of tenants who pay their rents weekly, or wish to report a repair needed, or see a responsible official on other tenancy matters. That such offices, and in particular the presence of a resident officer, are welcomed by tenants was made clear in evidence we received from tenants' organisations.

Flexibility of Organisation

41. There is scope for variation in the organisation between one authority and another, and there may well have to be varied arrangements for the management of different estates belonging to the same authority. Not only do estates differ in character, but their needs change. Many authorities find that more attention is needed initially on new estates until tenants have settled in. *It is important to keep the needs of different estates under review, so that the management service provided may be extended or modified to meet the particular case.*

42. It is usually easier to continue doing what has always been done than to introduce changes, even if these reduce work and make for greater efficiency. It is here that examination by organisation and methods specialists from either inside or outside the authority can often be useful. The object of such an examination would be to study the purpose of the organisation, and the means by which this purpose can be most efficiently and economically achieved. Particularly where more than one department is involved, administration may benefit by periodic review and overhaul, not only of the lesser matters of day-to-day organisation, but of such questions as the distribution of duties between departments and the relationship between committees and officers.

Cost of Management

43. Throughout our whole enquiry we have been conscious of the importance of ensuring that management should be not only efficient but economical. The cost of managing housing undertakings may appear small in comparison with the very

large capital invested, but as in all other activities, overhead expenses should be kept continually under review. Housing authorities are engaged in similar tasks, and it might be expected that the cost of carrying out these tasks would be assessable and available for purposes of comparison. In fact this is not so. The only statistics readily available are those published annually by the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants, and until recently these referred to rather more than one third only of the housing authorities in England and Wales. We are glad to know that this information has been extended in an attempt to cover them all. The statistics published by the Institute for the year 1957/58 show *average* general costs (excluding the special expenditure listed in Circular 1/53 of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government) varying from £3 for urban and rural districts up to £8 14s. 0d. for the metropolitan boroughs and the City of London.

44. Our questionnaire to local authorities included an enquiry as to the cost of supervision and management. The answers received showed figures for 1956/57 for individual authorities ranging from £1 6s. 0d. per house in the case of a small urban district to £21 16s. 0d. in a metropolitan borough whose properties are almost entirely flats, and whose costs of management included the special costs of caretakers, lifts, lighting, etc. The authorities were asked to divide, if possible, the cost of supervision and management among various functions but few were able to do this, and we obtained very little information as to how the total cost of management was made up.

45. The information available is only of limited use because there are no means of knowing what is included by each authority under the various headings which make up the cost of management. Strictly comparable figures are always difficult to obtain; management costs are inevitably less exact than for more self-contained services, because housing duties are so frequently divided between several departments. Local practices in the apportionment of expenditure vary, and comparisons between published costs of different authorities can be misleading.

46. There is an urgent need for an examination of the methods of allocation of expenses, and we believe that it would be most useful to achieve greater uniformity. This would make the figures given by authorities more comprehensive, the costs of various aspects of housing management more accurately ascertainable, and comparisons between authorities easier. We were glad to learn from the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors that they are carrying out an enquiry into management costs with the object of obtaining reliable comparative figures on a uniform basis. We are also interested to hear of the research into apportionment practices recently initiated by the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants. We believe that housing accounts and published statistics should be compiled on a more uniform basis. *We recommend that the enquiry into costing techniques which we advocate later should be extended to include the apportionment of costs of housing administration.*

CHAPTER 3

Estate Planning and Housing Management

47. *We consider that housing is a field in which far more study of tenants' needs and reaction should be made.* Such studies would lead to a saving both in the cost of management and maintenance as well as to the greater satisfaction of the tenants. There is a close relationship between the planning of new estates, the design

and construction of dwellings, and their subsequent management. In this connection, the personal knowledge of the elected representatives is valuable. The fullest use should also be made of the knowledge and experience of the medical officer of health. The more closely they, the planners, the architects and those who will have the duty of managing the estates when built, appreciate each other's purposes and problems, the more likely it is that management satisfactory to both landlord and tenant will result.

48. In the past the effect on management of what is done during the planning and design stages has not always received full consideration. *It is most important that housing managers be brought into consultation in the early stages of estate planning, and become recognised members of the team responsible for the layout of new estates and the design of houses.*

49. The primary point on which there must be close consultation between those who plan and those who manage is an assessment of the numbers, types, phasing and location of new houses required. Now that slum clearance is a major part of the housing authority's activity, particular count needs to be taken of families still living in unfit houses and the date at which rehousing should be planned. The housing manager, as the officer normally responsible for dealing with the waiting list and for investigating individual applications, has at his disposal information on the size and composition of the families waiting to be housed, and the proportion of applications received from old or single people. He must be conversant with such matters as local population trends, industrial development and overspill policy. He is also normally in touch at an early stage with the families to be rehoused as the result of slum clearance. It is clearly important that housing committees should have full information on the composition of their waiting lists to satisfy themselves that they are providing a proper proportion of dwellings of different sizes. In deciding the number of houses of different sizes which they require to build, housing committees must also assure themselves that existing houses are being used to the best advantage. The larger type of houses should not, for instance, be built unless it is clear that there will be a continuing demand for them, and that needs cannot be met by transfers of tenants who are under-occupying their present houses.

50. When the number, size, and location of new houses to be built has been decided, there should be further consultation between architects and those concerned with management on:

(a) requirements and preferences of tenants in matters of internal planning and equipment;

(b) need for estate amenities, their nature and extent;

(c) the most effective layout and construction from the point of view of economy and efficiency in management and maintenance, and convenience of tenants.

51. Both elected representatives and those responsible for management should be able to provide much information on the preferences of tenants, and women members in particular have a very practical contribution to make. Several organisations referred in their evidence to the housing manager as being the officer most suited to represent the tenant's point of view when the design and equipment of houses is under consideration. His knowledge of the way in which tenants use existing houses should carry weight in future planning; for instance, as to whether tenants like to use the kitchen for meals, or where they wish to keep the pram. The comments of prospective as well as of present tenants show the greater popularity

of certain house types or room arrangements, or a preference for particular means of access in blocks of flats. Again, a knowledge of the use made by tenants of equipment provided in existing dwellings, such as heating appliances or drying cabinets in flats, or their criticism of certain kinds of windows, or of storage space, or methods of rubbish disposal, is of value in deciding whether to repeat them in new buildings. *In view of the increasing number of flats being built it is important to study the reactions of tenants to the unaccustomed conditions of life in large blocks of flats, and to observe the use made of such things as balconies, laundries and common gardens.*

52. In considering the size and layout of gardens, the extent and use of open spaces, the width of verges, the position of paths, tree planting and so forth, the housing committee, and any other committees concerned, should consider not only appearance and initial cost but, what is just as important, the costs of maintenance. The housing committee should ensure that the views of the architect, the housing manager, the head of the parks department and the finance officer are all put before them, and, as necessary, weighed in the balance.

53. The provision of transport and community facilities on new estates, particularly shops, playgrounds and clubrooms, affects the satisfaction of tenants in their new surroundings and so is important to management. While individual members of the housing committee will have experience on such matters, the housing manager should not only be able to advise on the likely demand for any of these facilities, he should also know why in the past some have been more successful than others. The provision of enough garages and parking spaces is also a matter of importance, not only to the tenants but for the good appearance and maintenance of the estate. It is important to provide sufficient space for garages and parking even if the whole of it does not appear to be required at the outset.

54. *In planning the construction of new estates, the initial capital cost is often the foremost consideration, but in the long run management and maintenance costs are just as important.* It is essential therefore that members of housing committees should consider the experience of existing estates before they reach their decisions on the design and development of the new.

55. Records of maintenance are a valuable source of information as to materials, designs and equipment which prove satisfactory in use and economical or expensive in maintenance. It is essential that records should be designed to produce this information about performance. Some of this information will be obtained through the council's costing system, but some can only be obtained from records kept for the purpose. Particularly where experiments have been made in construction and equipment, it is important to watch the results and compare them with more traditional methods.

CHAPTER 4

Applications and Lettings

56. It is not part of the present inquiry to go over the ground covered by the two previous reports of the Housing Management Sub-Committee on "Selection of Tenants"* and "Residential Qualifications"†. Those reports gave detailed

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* Selection of Tenants: Third Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee: H.M.S.O. 1949. Price 6d. net.

† Residential Qualifications: Fifth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee: H.M.S.O. 1955. Price 1s. 6d. net.

guidance to local authorities on matters affecting the selection of tenants, but since they were issued slum clearance has been resumed on a large scale. A considerable proportion of new houses and flats, and vacancies occurring in existing dwellings, will be required for families moving from slums, and this will affect the availability of housing for applicants on the general list. *We think it necessary, therefore, to emphasise once again that local authorities should ensure that selection is based strictly on housing needs, and that a sound method of assessment is adopted.*

57. In deciding their policies for the selection of tenants, housing committees will have information from their housing officers about the composition of the waiting list, and such matters as the extent of overcrowding and the numbers of applicants living in rooms. Many authorities have found it possible to lay down a general policy of selection, leaving to their housing managers the responsibility of determining, within its framework, the order in which applicants be offered a house, only requiring reference to committee of those cases which need exceptional treatment. *This practice of delegation has many advantages and we commend it for adoption.*

58. The evidence we have received shows that, where a housing manager has been appointed, he is almost invariably responsible for keeping the application list, investigating applications, visiting applicants, and letting the house in accordance with the policy of the council. Occasionally these duties are shared, the list, for example, being maintained in the clerk's department while the housing manager is responsible for visiting applicants. We regard the handling of applications and the allocation of houses as being part of the normal functions of a housing manager. Where no housing manager has been appointed, the work is most frequently carried out in the clerk's department or in that of the chief public health inspector.

59. The waiting list should be accurate and up-to-date, otherwise it loses much of its value as an indication of the general demand for housing and may give an incorrect impression of the needs of an area. *Periodic reviews of waiting lists are essential, and the practice of those authorities who require applications to be renewed at stated intervals should be generally adopted.* Evidence was given of the cost of correspondence conducted between housing departments and applicants, and it is suggested that methods of reducing it should be studied. A leaflet giving applicants clear information about the method of selection may be helpful. In order to lessen the work involved in interviewing applicants and maintaining office records, some authorities place on a 'deferred' list those applicants whose needs are less urgent and who are unlikely to qualify for a considerable time. If the applicants are told, with a clear explanation, why they are only being accepted for the 'deferred' list, it tends to reduce the number of personal calls made at the housing department. These are definite advantages, but at the same time care must be taken to ensure that applications are transferred to the 'active' list as soon as a change in the applicant's circumstances warrant it.

60. It has been emphasised in previous reports that the initial contact with the tenant is of great importance, and that the way he is treated may have a lasting effect on future relations with him as a tenant. Much depends on the arrangements made for interviewing prospective tenants. Many applicants call at the housing department because of acute housing difficulties; they should be able to discuss these in private. There should also be proper arrangements for those waiting for an interview. It is hardly necessary to say that the officers who interview the applicants should be carefully selected and good at interviewing.

61. A visit to the applicant's family should be paid by a responsible member of the housing department both in order to assess the degree of the applicant's housing need, and also to decide what new accommodation should be offered. The officer who visits should be someone who can approach people with understanding; if a family has special problems they should be discovered at this stage. The allocation of a particular house or flat is a matter of importance to the family and to their future neighbours, and is not to be settled by merely offering them the keys of the next dwelling to be completed. The allocation of houses to the tenants qualifying for them is a vital part of the housing manager's duties. If the job is well done there will be greater contentment on the housing estates, and the number of requests for transfers will be substantially reduced.

62. Some applicants, not unnaturally, are anxious to keep their case before the housing committee, and think that constant letters to the housing department or personal calls on members will hasten the offer of accommodation. We believe that if applicants understand the policy for the selection of tenants and accept it as fair, they are usually prepared to wait their turn. The policy can be explained by various means such as public announcements through the press, by display of copies of the scheme for the selection of tenants in the estate office, or by printing it on the back of the application form. Most valuable of all is the careful and patient discussion with applicants by the housing staff of their queries. Such work may, in the end, bring considerable relief to elected members and eventually reduce office work.

63. Transfers form an important part of any housing service. The matter was dealt with at length in the report on "Transfers, Exchanges and Rents",* and the attention of local authorities is drawn once again to the conclusions and recommendations of that report. It is important to fit the right tenant into the right house, and in order to achieve this housing authorities should consider not only houses available by new building or by tenants giving notice, but also houses which do not fit their present occupants and which could be made available by exchange or transfer. Housing committees should regard the proper occupation of their houses as a matter of importance, and should require the officers responsible for management to make arrangements for the regular review of occupancy. The staff time which is needed to effect a transfer is very considerable, particularly when old people are involved, but it is well worth while both for the greater convenience and happiness of the tenants concerned, and in order to economise on new building. Tenants should be encouraged to realise that by accepting a transfer they are helping a family on the waiting list.

CHAPTER 5

Rent Collection

64. A local authority looks to its financial officer for information and advice on matters of housing finance and financial administration, after consultation with other officers concerned with housing management. The chief financial officer presents the accounts of housing activities, prescribes the form of subsidiary records, and carries out internal audit. The subsidiary records themselves, however, might be located either in the department of the chief financial officer or the housing

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* Transfers, Exchanges and Rents: Fourth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee: H.M.S.O. 1953. Price 1s. 9d. net.

manager, according to the rent collection system in force, or the views of the local authority on the centralisation of records. The chief financial officer is ultimately responsible for all moneys collected on behalf of the local authority, whatever the arrangements for rent collection may be.

65. Rent collection is carried out either by the housing manager or by the treasurer. The arguments in favour of rent collection under the housing manager rest on the fact that the payment of rent is the primary link between the landlord and tenant. It is therefore an asset on the personal relations side of management for the housing manager to have rent collection under his care, because it allows easy and regular contact with the tenant. Through rent collection the housing manager is able to keep in touch with an estate, and to keep himself informed on all matters connected with it. For the tenant, it is an advantage if he can pay his rent to someone who can speak for the housing manager on other matters, and deal with requests for repairs and questions connected with the tenancy.

66. The authorities who favour rent collection by the treasurer maintain that it is more economical and efficient to divorce rent collection from other functions of management, and to make the rent collectors responsible solely for collecting the rents. It is argued that the rent collectors can collect more rents a day so that fewer need be employed, and that other management matters can be better dealt with by more specialised officers.

67. Although practice varies, there has undoubtedly been a trend in recent years towards combining rent collection with other functions of management under the care of the housing manager, whether he be in charge of a separate housing management department or in charge of a housing management section under the control of another chief officer. *We think that this is right as a general principle, and that those local authorities who do not do this should examine their present arrangements and satisfy themselves that, whilst they may be efficient and businesslike, they are not losing other less tangible but nevertheless important advantages.*

68. Where rent collectors are under the control of the treasurer, it is necessary to ensure that there is the closest co-operation at all levels, and particularly between those carrying out rent collection in the treasurer's department on the one hand, and the housing manager and his staff on the other. Rent collectors should report to the housing manager, or an appropriate member of his staff, matters coming to their notice with which the housing manager will have to deal. The collector should be informed by the housing manager about matters of general policy affecting the estates which may be raised with him by tenants. This interchange of information is rendered more difficult if the rent collectors operate not only in a different department, but in a different building. Co-operation could be made easier if the housing manager met the rent collectors regularly. Where tenants wish to pay rents at an office, it would be an advantage to both housing manager and tenants if these rents could be taken in the housing department rather than the treasurer's department. In this way, tenants wishing to raise other tenancy matters at the same time do not have to call at two departments. The treasurer's responsibility can be maintained by seconding one of his staff to receive rents.

Duties of the Rent Collector

69. Some authorities feel that staff who combine the collection of rents with other management duties should be known as housing assistants, or some equivalent title, rather than as rent collectors. We have, however, decided to use the term rent

collector throughout this report, largely because the people who pay the rents think of them in this way. We do not wish to suggest that their duties are necessarily limited to rent collection, or that we underestimate the value of their work. In the same way, we use the term rent collection to include collection of rent at an estate office as well as at the door.

70. The main duty of the rent collector is to collect rents, and whether he calls at the house or receives rent at the office, he naturally represents the landlord in the eyes of the tenant. It is convenient to the tenant to be able to report to the collector matters arising from his tenancy which require the landlord's attention, whether it be, for example, a repair needed or an application for an exchange of tenancy. Representatives of those tenants' organisations from whom we took evidence made it clear that the rent collector is often regarded by the tenants they represented as more than a collector of cash; he is expected at least to be able to take requests for repairs and supply information. This view was reinforced in the survey made by Professor Marsh where it was found that of the 67 per cent of the tenants who pay their rent directly to the rent collector, the most common topic of discussion between tenants and collectors related to repairs or complaints about the house.

71. Of the 57 authorities from whom we received evidence there were only 6 whose collectors do not accept requests for repairs from tenants. The others all expect their collectors to receive requests for repairs and in most cases to carry out a variety of other duties as well—e.g. 31 authorities require the collectors to deal with minor tenancy matters, 26 expect them to report on requests for transfers and exchanges, and 18 make them responsible for some housing welfare work.

72. A number of arguments were advanced in favour of making full use of the regular contact between rent collector and tenant. If the collector, after calling at the house, is able to report clearly on at least the simpler repairs needed, it avoids in many cases the need for an investigation by a member of the maintenance staff before the work is put in hand. If he can answer enquiries, it saves the time of housing staff in interviewing or replying to a letter, and the tenants' time in calling at the office. Visits to the house by other housing officers—for example, to investigate such matters as a request for a transfer, or to make an alteration to the house—can be reduced; the tenant can make all his enquiries through someone he knows; the housing manager, and through him the housing committee, have a source of information about the condition of the properties and any matters of significance connected with the estates.

73. The arguments against extending the collector's duties are that a collector obviously collects more rents if he is not concerned with other aspects of management, and that other officers can concentrate upon more specialised functions if they are freed from rent collection.

74. The weight of the evidence, as well as what we learned in the course of visits paid to local authorities, leads us to believe that management is likely to be more successful where value is attached to the contact made with the tenants by the rent collector, and where the collector's responsibilities are extended so that he may effectively act as the agent of the landlord. We recognise that this will involve allowing the collector adequate time for doing additional work on the estates. Not all estates will require the same amount of extra work from a collector; tenants moving to new estates will obviously need more information than the occupants of well-established ones, and some estates will have a higher proportion than others of

difficult tenants. *In general, however, we believe it to be to the advantage of council and tenants alike to combine other duties with the work of rent collection.*

75. The truth of this statement depends on the calibre of the rent collector, and it is true that not all collectors at present employed by local authorities would be fitted to undertake additional duties. In the long run management would benefit through increasing the scope and interest of the rent collector's work. The routine of rent collection, if it is limited to signing the rent book and giving change, is not in itself work of great interest. If it is extended so that the collector feels some personal responsibility for the houses and for the care of the estate it becomes a much more worthwhile job from his point of view.

Payment of Rent

76. Weekly rent collection at the door was at one time the general practice, but during the last few years there has been a steady increase in the numbers of tenants who pay at an office, and in many areas fortnightly collections have been introduced. Changes in the period and method of paying rent are indicative of changing social conditions, *and it is very important, both from the point of view of economy and of convenience to tenants, that housing authorities should ensure that their practices keep abreast of developments.* For instance, as more tenants open bank accounts more rents are likely to be paid by cheque or banker's order. Payments in this way will not only be convenient to tenants but will reduce security risks in the collection and transport of cash. It is perhaps not irrelevant to recall that the legal obligation is on the tenant to take his rent to the landlord.

77. We found that among the authorities we consulted, the proportion of rents paid at an office varied from 1 per cent to 38 per cent. Of 50 authorities who gave definite replies to a question on this point, 15 received 10 per cent of their rents in office payments, 26 received between 10 per cent and 20 per cent, and 9 received over 20 per cent. It may be that an increasing number of tenants will find it more convenient to bring their rent to an office. If so, it may be necessary to open additional offices, or to keep existing offices open for the payment of rent on certain evenings, in order to avoid congestion and queues at a single office receiving large numbers of rent payments on Saturday mornings. The cost of opening extra offices must be watched. Whether they can be run economically will depend upon whether enough tenants elect to pay at the office and will adhere to the arrangement once it has been made.

78. We understand that those authorities who have introduced collections at fortnightly or even longer intervals have done so largely for reasons of economy. More than half the authorities from whom evidence was received collect some of their rents at longer intervals than weekly; 16 of the 57 authorities (10 of them rural district councils) do not make any weekly collections; 17 receive some of their rents at monthly or even quarterly intervals. In the case of two rural district councils all rents are collected monthly, but most of the other authorities receive only a small proportion of their rents at longer intervals than fortnightly. In these cases it is probable that monthly and quarterly payments are mainly received from tenants occupying houses specially provided for those with higher incomes, or from people in receipt of monthly salaries.

79. Where fortnightly instead of weekly collections have been introduced the evidence is that there has not been any significant increase in arrears, but the

tenants' organisations and the individual tenants whom we interviewed expressed a preference for weekly payment. They said that most tenants receive their wages weekly and would have difficulty in re-arranging the family budget to provide for fortnightly payments. This view has not been borne out by the experience of those authorities who have made the change; they find that the weekly wage earner can successfully make the necessary adjustment. The authority in whose area Professor Marsh's survey was made has introduced fortnightly collections, and when tenants were asked if they approved of paying rent fortnightly, 57 per cent said 'yes', 33 per cent said 'no', and 10 per cent did not know.

80. Authorities will need to consider the economic position of their tenants and the possibility that payment of rent at longer than weekly intervals might lead to difficulties for the tenants or for themselves, as landlords. Fortnightly collection is better suited to some estates than to others, and we note that most authorities who have introduced fortnightly collections have begun with some of their estates only. The collection of rent fortnightly does not mean that the work can be done by half as many collectors, but there will nevertheless be a considerable reduction in collecting staff. *We believe that payment of rent fortnightly has much to commend it, not least on grounds of economy, and whilst appreciating that local authorities as landlords must safeguard their own and their tenants interests, we feel they would do well to consider introducing collections at longer than weekly intervals.*

81. Looking ahead, we believe that it should be regarded as a sign of progress when tenants as a whole are ready to pay their rents at longer intervals by cheque or order. Local authorities should make it their aim to bring about the gradual acceptance of new arrangements by the tenants, even though it may still remain necessary to make special arrangements for certain groups of tenants. Our attention has been drawn to the fact that certain other countries have facilities for monthly payment of rent through post offices. We suggest that consideration might be given to the possibility of rent being paid through equivalent agencies in this country.

82. Some authorities have introduced a system of 'rent free' weeks. The rent is calculated over 48 or 50 weeks each year; the 'rent free' weeks are arranged to coincide with Christmas or other public holidays. The arrangement has two advantages from the council's point of view; it reduces the increase in arrears which frequently occurs at holiday periods, and avoids the administrative difficulty of collecting rent at these times. For the tenant it means slightly higher, though fewer, payments, but the effect is a form of saving which tenants usually appreciate at the holiday periods. Eighty eight per cent of the tenants questioned in Professor Marsh's survey approved of the system. It is an arrangement which can be more conveniently introduced at a time when other changes are being made in rents or rates, and we recommend its adoption by local authorities.

83. The importance of preventing the accumulation of arrears by dealing with them in the early stages was impressed upon us by several witnesses. This matter was discussed at length in the report on "Unsatisfactory Tenants".* We refer to this in Chapter 8.

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* Unsatisfactory Tenants: Sixth Report of the Housing Management Sub-Committee: H.M.S.O. 1955. Price 1s. 9d. net.

CHAPTER 6

Maintenance of Properties

84. It is in the interest of landlord and tenant alike that a house should be well looked after. The landlord is concerned with the preservation of his capital invested in the house; the occupant is concerned because his personal comfort is affected. While the tenant expects prompt and efficient maintenance by his landlord, the landlord is equally entitled to expect that the tenant will carry out his obligations. If maintenance by the local authority is prompt and efficient, the co-operation and personal interest of the tenant in all that concerns the care of the house and its surroundings are more likely to be secured.

Contributions to Housing Repairs Accounts

85. Housing authorities are required by Section 51 of the Housing (Financial Provisions) Act, 1958, to keep a housing repairs account for the purpose of equalising the annual charge to their revenue in respect of repairs and maintenance. The present minimum contribution to this account is £8 per house or flat per year. The "Housing Statistics" for 1957/58 published by the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants show closing balances per dwelling for the authorities covered by their review ranging from £10 2s. 0d. deficit to £64 2s. 0d. credit. The information supplied by the 54 local authorities who replied to our questionnaire on this point showed that contributions to the repairs fund for the year 1956/57 ranged from £8 to £27 12s. 0d. for each house or flat, while expenditure for the same year ranged from £6 1s. 10d. to £33. Five authorities were making only the minimum contribution but in three of these five cases expenditure per house for the previous financial year had exceeded £8. Replies to our questionnaire did in fact show that in the case of nearly half the authorities there was an excess of expenditure per dwelling over the amount put into the housing repairs account. This can only mean the gradual depletion of any balances in the repairs funds.

86. If this sample is indicative of a general trend, it is a serious matter. Some local authorities are already faced with high expenditure on their earliest houses both for maintenance and modernisation, and it is inevitable that expenditure will also rise on the post-war houses as they become older. Authorities will be unable to meet their obligations from the repairs fund if the depletion of their reserves continues, and it is of the utmost importance that adequate balances should be built up and maintained. *We recommend that each local authority should review regularly the state of its housing repairs account in the light of current economic trends and, where necessary, take prompt action to ensure that the amount paid in annually is sufficient to enable their dwellings to be kept in sound condition and to build up an adequate reserve.*

87. Before an authority can decide what would be an adequate contribution to the repairs fund, they will need an assessment of the condition of their properties and a programme of the work to be done over a period of years, covering not only day-to-day repairs but external painting and maintenance, renewals and so forth. The housing manager or the surveyor, or the two jointly, should be responsible for presenting a report on these matters. This will involve a systematic inspection of some or all of the council's houses. Such an inspection will in any case be valuable and may be a means of detecting deterioration or work needed in parts of the dwellings not frequently examined. *A thorough inspection of all the council's properties should be carried out at intervals of three to five years.*

Responsibility for Internal Decorations and Repairs

88. The increasing cost of maintenance and repairs, and its effect on the repairs fund, has led many local authorities to reconsider the extent to which it is reasonable and practicable to make tenants responsible for internal decorations and repairs. It is becoming more common to require tenants to do their own internal redecorating and minor internal repairs.

89. All but 9 of the 57 authorities replying to our questionnaire leave interior decorating to their tenants, although some supply a limited amount of material annually to the tenants. This shift of responsibility not only reduces the burden of maintenance costs on the authority; in some cases it may be an alternative to an increase in rent. The freedom of choice of colour schemes encourages the pride and interest which tenants take in the property. A council house becomes more of a home when it is decorated to the tenant's individual taste and not to a standard pattern, and far more care is taken of a house when the tenant has spent a good deal of time and trouble on it. It is interesting to note from the survey carried out by Professor Marsh that 78 per cent of the tenants approved of having to do their own interior decorating. *In view of the economies effected by this arrangement and the satisfactory results which have been obtained by the authorities who have adopted it, we recommend that authorities who have not introduced this transfer of responsibility for internal decorations and minor internal repairs should consider doing so.* The house ought to be in good condition at the commencement of a tenancy. Arrangements may have to be made to help families such as the old or others who for special reasons would find the responsibility beyond them.

90. Where the tenant is responsible for certain internal repairs, it may be necessary to differentiate between those minor repairs which the tenant can carry out without reporting to the council, and those which must be reported to the council before the work is done.* In the latter case, the tenant should have the choice of making his own arrangements for the work to be carried out to the satisfaction of the council or for having the work done by the council at his expense. In the case of repairs which remain the landlord's responsibility, tenants should pay when these are caused through carelessness or wanton damage.

91. This transfer of responsibility to tenants may require at the outset some additional supervision. It also emphasises the need for the regular periodic inspection which we have already recommended in paragraph 87. There is much scope here for co-operation between housing manager and tenant. Care of the houses can be encouraged by the management staff, who should show interest in and appreciation of the work done. Authorities can also with advantage explain fully to tenants the limitations of the repairs allowance for individual properties, so that they know how much of the rent is available for maintenance. This might lead to a clearer appreciation by the tenants of the proportion of rent needed to keep the house in good condition.

Administrative Arrangements for Repairs and Maintenance

92. The question of which department of the local authority should undertake the responsibility for organising and carrying out maintenance and repairs on its

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* See Transfers, Exchanges and Rents; paragraph 60 and Appendix C.

houses and flats usually depends on the size of the authority and its housing estates, and the experience and qualifications of its officers. In some areas, the responsibility rests wholly with the housing manager; in some it rests wholly with the surveyor (or other equivalent technical officer); in others it rests partly with the housing manager and partly with the surveyor. In the case of smaller authorities the work, in whole or in part, is often carried out by contract with local firms on the instruction of either the housing manager or the surveyor.

93. In considering these various arrangements, it is recognised that a fully qualified and experienced housing manager should have the necessary knowledge to fit him for running a works department which would deal with all normal work of housing repairs and maintenance, and that in many authorities the housing manager is in fact in charge of such a department. On the other hand, many authorities have insufficient maintenance work to justify two works departments, and in such cases it is usual for the surveyor to control a general works department which undertakes the work of housing repairs and maintenance as part of a wider service. While we do not recommend for general adoption any particular arrangement, *we would emphasise that where there are divided responsibilities there should be the fullest co-operation between the housing manager and the surveyor*, and that there should be as much flexibility between the two departments as possible. In day-to-day practice, this involves regular discussion between the management staff and the repairs foreman. Some authorities achieve good co-ordination by seconding to the housing manager a technical officer from the surveyor's department.

94. Where the housing manager is not responsible for the arrangements for actually carrying out the work, it is desirable to draw a distinction between the day-to-day repairs and the longer term maintenance work such as external repainting, repointing, renewals and modernisations. Requests for day-to-day repairs are frequently received by rent collectors, but some come by post and some are made at local offices. It seems natural that the tenant should look to the person responsible for managing the houses to see that the repairs are carried out, and if they are not or if the tenant is not satisfied, the housing manager is likely to be the person to receive the impact. *We recommend that the housing manager should be responsible for the co-ordination of requests for day-to-day repairs, for recommending their priority, for indenting on the surveyor for the work to be done, and for following up to see that it is properly done in reasonable time.* Long-term maintenance work, its planning and co-ordination within the financial limits laid down by the council, is a large scale operation in which the human factor is less important, and here it is felt that the responsibility would rest more naturally with the surveyor. We would, however, expect that the housing manager's views as to the order in which the work should be carried out would be given due weight.

95. Irrespective of which officer local authorites decide shall be responsible for repairs and maintenance, systematic control of the progress of the work is essential. The authority should satisfy itself that the system is such that it works smoothly from start to finish. Repairs consist of a multiplicity of small jobs, and it needs only a few orders to go astray or be delayed unnecessarily to give rise to bad relations with the tenants. An explanation should be given if there are unavoidable delays, and if it is necessary to refuse a request altogether, this should be done clearly and specifically. Adequate records must be kept. They should enable work ordered to be followed up and a check kept on work outstanding. They should show whether maintenance and repair is heavier on one type of house than another, and whether

particular fittings and appliances are expensive in upkeep. They should also show whether certain tenants are causing an undue amount of work to be done through careless use of the property, or are having difficulty with certain appliances.

96. Tenants' requests for repairs are made in various ways. If the trend towards fortnightly, or longer, rent collection increases, or if more tenants elect to pay their rents at an office, a more general system of notification by post may become necessary. Some authorities have found that repair cards are an advantage. These cards are given to the tenant for completion when a repair is necessary, and the tenant sends them direct to the authority, showing the times when access to the house can be obtained. It must, however, be remembered that although most tenants will report defects as they arise, some may not. A housing manager's knowledge of the tenants should enable him to arrange an *ad hoc* inspection in any case where there is a possibility of a house deteriorating because of a tenant's failure to report defects or damage.

97. The efficiency and quality of the work achieved by the repair service will depend largely on good organisation and supervision, as well as on the personal interest taken by the operatives. Where the houses are too many for repair work to be regulated by close personal control from the centre, the employment of divisional supervisors may become advisable. Mobile multi-purpose squads for urgent repairs may be an advantage in some areas. Other repairs should be executed in batches to save travelling time. In rural districts, repairs and maintenance present particular difficulties since repairs may have to be carried out simultaneously on a number of widely scattered estates. The district may be divided into a number of zones in which non-urgent repairs are carried out in rotation. The programming of day-to-day work and ensuring adequate supervision is of the utmost importance. These are but a few of many devices which can be adopted to ensure economical and efficient maintenance.

98. We are pleased to hear that the Royal Institute of Public Administration are about to set up a research group to study the operation of housing repairs and maintenance by local authorities. We commend this project and suggest that local authorities study the findings.

The Costing of Repairs and Maintenance

99. We are firmly convinced of the need for a method of standardised costing to cover repairs and maintenance, and that the subject is one which would warrant a further and specialised investigation in the light of modern developments in costing techniques. Most authorities have costing systems of some kind: there is costing by trades, by type of house, or by individual jobs, but there is no general system in operation at the present time. The variety of the work, the multiplicity of small jobs, and the scattered nature of the tasks in rural areas make the problem of costing difficult, but one which it is all the more important to tackle. It is understood that the Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants is working on the problem of a standardised accounting system and if, as the result of further study, a costing manual could be evolved it would greatly assist local authorities. The adoption by them of a standard method of costing would make possible far more accurate comparisons, which in turn would provide local authorities with a yardstick against which to measure their costs. *We therefore recommend that an enquiry be made into costing techniques for housing maintenance, with a view to the issue of a costing manual.*

CHAPTER 7

General Appearance of Estates

100. The general appearance of an estate is immensely important, and local authorities should ensure that the standards of maintenance of the surroundings are just as high as those aimed at in the upkeep of the houses themselves. A high standard depends largely on successful co-operation between landlord and tenant: where a local authority sets a high standard both in the original planting and subsequent care of open spaces the tendency is for tenants to respond, and to show real pride in the appearance of the estate, and of their own houses and gardens. There are estates, however, where the general level of maintenance of open spaces and verges falls considerably below the quality of the houses and the efforts of the tenants themselves.

101. It is encouraging to tenants and a great advantage to management if planting and grassing can be made to coincide, as far as is practicable, with the completion of the houses. If the verges and open spaces are not completed until many months after the tenants have moved in, it is then much more difficult to secure their proper care and use. Nor should vacant sites earmarked for some future building purpose, even though they may not be under the direct control of the housing committee, be left in an untidy state. Unless they are kept reasonably well, they detract from the appearance of the estates and suggest to the tenants that there is no need to take care of open spaces already laid out.

102. It was clear from the evidence that local authorities have varying practices in the allocation of responsibility for outdoor maintenance. The housing department, the parks department and the highways department may all be concerned. The evidence also gives the impression that the responsibility of the various departments is not always clearly defined, with the result that there may be difficulties in maintaining a uniformly high standard where more than one committee or department is charged with carrying out this outdoor maintenance. *It is essential that the local authority should have an agreed policy, and there should be arrangements at committee level for co-ordinating the work of general maintenance and the supervision of an estate as a whole.*

103. In order to encourage tenants starting new gardens, authorities should ensure that building contractors clear the site properly of rubble and preserve and subsequently replace or supply the top soil. There will inevitably be a number of older or physically handicapped tenants for whom gardening is difficult. Though some may get help from neighbours, or through the good offices of a tenants' association, yet for many old or disabled people the best solution is likely to be a dwelling with either no garden or a very small one. The cultivation of a small flower bed outside a bungalow or flat can give great pleasure to an old person. As more authorities build flats it becomes easier to offer to tenants, who either cannot or will not cultivate a garden, transfers to more suitable accommodation. It is, however, desirable to help tenants in the creation of gardens by giving them skilled advice.

104. A problem in estate management today is the increase in the number of cars, vans and lorries, owned either by tenants or their employers, which are parked on the roads, or too often on verges and in front gardens. It is not always easy on older estates, and is indeed impossible on some, to provide sufficient garages or properly laid out parking spaces. It is a problem which confronts many authorities

and there is no ready answer as far as existing estates already developed are concerned. It may be necessary to transfer tenants who need garages or parking facilities to other estates, where these can be provided, and to let the vacated houses to tenants who do not have cars. More authorities will have to consider allowing garages to be erected in the tenants' gardens where practicable. Elsewhere the solution may be acquisition of additional land near an estate on which garages can be built.

105. In planning new estates, it is better to make over-provision rather than under-provision, to cater for the continuing increase in car ownership. *We are of the opinion that the whole subject of the provision of garages and parking space on existing, as well as future, housing estates is one which would well repay a separate and special study.*

Caretaking

106. Reference was made in the report "Living in Flats"* to the additional work involved in the management of estates which consist largely of blocks of flats, and to the importance of appointing the right kind of man as superintendent or caretaker. The higher density on these estates means that more people are using a restricted space, and that the surrounding ground is in communal use. Services such as central heating and hot water, lifts and laundries require skilled maintenance; they must also be carefully used by the tenants, and much depends on the initial instruction given to them and on subsequent friendly guidance. Cleaning arrangements have to be made for communal balconies, staircases and entrances, whether by the tenants or otherwise. For these reasons it is usual for local authorities to appoint caretakers for flats. On the larger estates, it may be desirable to have a resident superintendent in charge of the staff needed for caretaking and looking after the services and the mechanical equipment of the flats, and it is sometimes found possible for him to be responsible for rent collection or a rent office. In the case of smaller blocks, the caretaker is generally responsible for manual work including cleaning and minor repairs.

107. Since more local authorities are now building flats for the first time, they may be interested to know that the Institute of Housing and the Metropolitan Association of Chief Housing Officers and Architects have recently prepared a paper on "Caretaking in Blocks of Flats". The paper is obtainable from the Institute of Housing at 50, Tufton Street, S.W.1.

CHAPTER 8

Landlord and Tenant

108. The relationship between a local authority and its tenants is twofold. There is an ordinary business relationship bound by an agreement whether implied or direct, and similar to that which exists between the private landlord and his tenants. The second relationship is that between the local authority and the citizen. The essence of good relationship is mutual understanding and confidence. The tenant—not only as a tenant but as a citizen—expects fair and decent treatment from the

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* Living in Flats: Report of the Flats Sub-Committee of the Central Housing Advisory Committee: H.M.S.O. 1952. Price 1s. 6d. net.

representative body, and if dissatisfied, can make complaints either individually or collectively to any council member. Tenants have in fact opportunities to make representations to their landlords which are not open to tenants of private property. The local authority has opportunities through press reports of meetings and other publicity, and even more directly, of making known to the tenant the reasons for the housing policy which it is adopting.

109. Relations between landlord and tenant may often be influenced by the extent and nature of the conditions governing the occupation of the house or flat. It is important that the tenant should be given a clear understanding of these conditions and obligations. A few local authorities still make use of a general tenancy agreement, but the majority set out the conditions of tenancy on the back of the rent card or on a form which the tenant signs. *On taking up the tenancy it is essential that the tenant be asked to read over the conditions, and that any special points should be discussed with him; he should be told of the arrangements about rent collection, reporting of repairs, and dealing with requests and complaints.*

110. The conditions aim at securing the proper care and use of the property and the prevention of annoyance to neighbours. Some rent cards in current use list as many as thirty items in print so small as to be almost illegible, and they obviously cannot achieve their objective. Some of the conditions are out of date and suggest that it is many years since they were reviewed: some appear unduly fussy and restrictive. *It is recommended that authorities should review their conditions of tenancy and see that they are clear and in line with the requirements of the day.*

111. Local authorities can prevent much subsequent trouble if they help and advise tenants when they move into their houses. This is particularly worth while where tenants are setting up house for the first time or moving to a different district. They may need information on the use of the various appliances with which the house or flat is equipped, and in some cases on services such as lifts, central heating, hot water and refuse disposal. Information of this kind should be given when the tenant is about to move in and a demonstration arranged, if possible. Sometimes an information leaflet referring to the particular house or flat and its appliances is given to each ingoing tenant. Some authorities consider it useful to provide leaflets on specific subjects, such as frost precautions or the use of heating appliances, which can be distributed at appropriate times. *Many authorities provide each tenant with a handbook and this practice is recommended.* The handbook can explain the conditions of tenancy, and how the rent is made up, give advice about the use of appliances and information about public services and facilities available in the district. The handbook might with advantage include advice about hire-purchase agreements and a warning about the dangers of over-commitment.

112. Tenants of council houses normally pay a rent which is inclusive of rates. The rent book should have a statement on the front showing how the total is divided into rent, general rate and water rate. This statement in some cases includes charges for such things as hot water, central heating, and electricity, which are collected with the rent. It is important that this information should always be clearly stated on the rent book. In evidence from tenants our attention was drawn to the fact that, because they pay their rates with their rents, they do not receive the same information as other householders as to how the rates are made up. Every ratepayer should know how the rates are being spent, and *we recommend that all local authorities should supply their tenants with information similar to that shown on the rate demand notes sent to other ratepayers.*

113. Apart from a small minority consisting broadly of the old, the handicapped, and unsatisfactory families, tenants as a whole are able to stand on their own feet and need less constant contact with the landlord. Even so, it is essential that channels of communication should be kept open for all tenants. Professor Marsh's survey showed that the small proportion of tenants who had personal problems which they wished to discuss with the housing authority preferred to do so with an officer at the housing department rather than with the rent collector.

114. Large scale management should aim at the encouragement of a sense of independence among the tenants whilst retaining that sense of personal relationship which almost automatically arises where the local authority owns only a few hundred houses. But as the size of the undertaking increases it may be less easy to create and maintain this relationship. Although the tenants may regard the rent collector as the first line of communication with the landlord on day-to-day matters arising from their individual tenancies, they may feel a need, through a tenants' association, or in other ways, for discussion with more senior officers of the management staff or even with the housing committee itself on matters of wider importance, such as the proposed introduction of a new rent system or changes in responsibility for maintenance and repairs; or indeed they may want to put forward suggestions themselves on matters of common interest to the estate.

Tenants' Associations

115. The point was made in evidence from both local authorities and tenants' organisations that where the local authority had accepted the principle of joint consultation with tenants' associations or community groups, a better understanding of the points of view of each side had resulted. Local difficulties and irritations, especially those which inevitably occur in the early life of a new estate, were generally soon overcome, and a system of periodic meetings with authorities at which there was discussion on general policy and matters affecting the well-being of an estate resulted in close and friendly co-operation.

116. The attitude of local authorities towards tenants' associations tends to vary according to the circumstances in which an association has sprung up. Naturally the main purpose of most such associations is to watch over the interests of the tenant. Their approach may differ widely, some starting with the belief that the interests of tenant and landlord are inevitably opposed. We believe, however, that whatever the starting point, *the wise course for the local authority is to treat associations as responsible bodies and seek to secure their confidence and co-operation.* A healthy association can provide a most useful link between tenants and management; it can be both a stimulus and an outlet for the tenants' social activities.

117. We do not regard it as a function of the local authority and the housing management staff to initiate the formation of tenants' or community associations, but the housing manager's advice and interest in the organisation of a representative body should be available, at any rate in the early stages of a group's formation.

Housing Management and the Welfare Services

118. There are various matters arising from a tenancy which have to be dealt with by the local authority as part of the normal relationship between landlord and tenant. These may concern the care and use of the house and garden, the tenant's ability to pay the rent or his need to transfer to another house. They may also concern behaviour which would affect the neighbours, or the standards which it is

sought to maintain on an estate as a whole. Most of these tenancy matters can only be dealt with by the landlord and are in fact handled by the housing manager or his staff in the normal course of their work. They are best dealt with initially by the official who knows the family best, and early treatment of the case may often prevent greater difficulties. This is especially so where there are arrears of rent.

119. Some of the problems which affect a tenancy may also be the concern of welfare agencies, either statutory or voluntary. In such cases, the housing manager should immediately seek the assistance of the appropriate welfare service. *Local authorities as landlords are interested in the general well-being of their tenants, but should not give the impression that they are running a 'secondary welfare service' for council tenants and care should be taken to avoid duplication with any of the social services available for the population as a whole.* The housing manager's staff should have a working knowledge of the social and welfare services that are available. They should know to whom and how application for assistance should be made, and be able to give information about these services to the tenants. There should be constant and close liaison between the housing manager and the health, welfare and children's departments, the National Assistance Board, Old People's Welfare Committees, and the other appropriate voluntary organisations.

120. Even though there is greater independence among tenants generally, local authorities may always have a proportion of tenants of low domestic standards, if only because they do not have the same freedom as a private landlord to be selective in choosing tenants. Though families of this kind are few in number, they require a considerable amount of attention both on their own account and because of their effect on their neighbours. The problems these families give rise to were discussed at length in the report on "Unsatisfactory Tenants". It is essential that efforts made on their behalf in collaboration with the various welfare organisations, both statutory and voluntary, should be closely co-ordinated, and that housing authorities should make full use of the co-ordinating committees set up by the welfare authorities. The housing authority should ensure that the housing manager has a place on the co-ordinating committee for the area; he must bring the difficulties of any tenant in need of help to the attention of this committee at the earliest possible moment. We understand that of 145 county councils and county borough councils, 132 have set up co-ordinating arrangements of one kind or another.

121. Some of the families who need help of this kind have got into their present state primarily because they have been discouraged by bad housing or lack of a house, and have given up trying to maintain decent standards. Special advice and help at the time of rehousing can do much to rehabilitate such families.

122. The rent collector is likely to be one of the first to notice if a family in these circumstances is getting to a critical stage when help must be called in quickly. It can be an advantage in cases of this kind if the rent is collected weekly at the house by an experienced officer. Representatives of other social agencies may from time to time be calling at the house but the regular call of the rent collector, particularly if he is regarded as a friend, may be the one stable event of the week. In exceptional cases, where another statutory officer is regularly visiting a family for a definite period, some authorities have found it useful to allow him, in agreement with the housing manager, to collect the rent.

123. The welfare authorities have certain responsibilities for the care of old and handicapped people, and the housing manager should work in close co-operation

with the welfare departments to obtain full use of the help they can give. He should also be in touch with the local officers of the National Assistance Board who are often able to do much for old people or for other families in difficulty. The rent collector should keep a kindly eye on elderly people living alone who may not be in touch with any other social agencies.

124. Some housing authorities include on their staff housing welfare officers or visitors whose principal duties are visiting applicants and those tenants who need special help or advice on matters connected with the occupancy of the house. In the case of the smaller local authorities, the number of tenants needing special visiting is usually too small to justify the employment of a specialised housing welfare officer; problems which are beyond the rent collector or the housing assistant are normally dealt with by the housing manager himself, or where there is no housing manager by the official responsible for the tenancy aspects of management.

125. Among the 57 authorities replying to our questionnaire there were 8 who said they employed one or more housing welfare officers of this kind. The majority rely in the main upon their housing assistants or senior officials in the housing department to look after these welfare matters. It is likely that in most housing departments there are one or two people whose personal qualities fit them for handling housing welfare problems or who are especially good at it, and if so it is obviously desirable to make these primarily responsible for such work. *Since the need for specialised welfare work as part of the landlord's function has decreased, it will usually be preferable to combine this work with other management duties except in the case of the larger authorities.* It is essential that the staff in contact with tenants are aware of the machinery through which welfare problems can immediately be referred to the appropriate authorities.

Arrears of Rent

126. Rent arrears are the most frequent sign of family difficulties and they sometimes occur among tenants who are by no means of the problem family type or even in financial need. A family may, for instance, fall behind with the rent because of illness, domestic upset or simply through bad budgeting, or too much hire purchase. *In all cases, prompt action to prevent arrears from accumulating is essential,* and it is very desirable that an experienced officer should deal with the matter. It may be necessary to see both husband and wife together. The representatives of welfare and children's services who gave evidence urged that their local officers should be informed as early as possible of families falling into arrear, especially those with young children, so that any help they can give may be provided before the arrears become so large as to be difficult to repay, or lead to the possibility of eviction. In some districts, tenants who fall into arrears are interviewed by a sub-committee of the council. This frequently has a salutary effect, and if the tenant is in real personal difficulty it gives the authority an opportunity to hear of it at first hand.

127. In cases where a tenant who is in arrears with his rent is in receipt of national assistance, the area officer of the National Assistance Board should be informed at once. The Board believe that people on national assistance should be treated like other members of the community and be encouraged in the responsible handling of their money. If, however, recipients default on the rent, the Board can take active measures and will, in the last resort, pay the rent, or such part of it as is covered by national assistance, direct to the local authority as landlord. But this should rarely be necessary if the Board know of the arrears at an early stage.

CHAPTER 9

Tenants' Clubrooms and Community Activities

128. No community can be regarded as satisfactory if it lacks proper facilities for social activities. The building of community centres making full provision for the leisure-time activities of a whole neighbourhood is normally a function of the education authority, but housing authorities are empowered to provide tenants' meeting rooms on a more limited scale for the benefit of the tenants on their housing estates.

129. The need for clubrooms has frequently made itself felt and more particularly on estates which form a self-contained community. The same need often arises where, because of the size or location of the estates, tenants feel some sense of separation from the surrounding neighbourhood. Where clubrooms have been provided, they are generally of real value.

130. Tenants in new and possibly strange surroundings need a place where they can meet each other, discuss common interests and organise their social activities. This need is apparent very early in the life of an estate, and it is important that it should be met immediately, so that the enthusiasm for and interest in the new estate may not be lost, and that the necessary leadership may emerge. It is essential that there shall be some place where, if tenants wish to meet, they can do so. New estates usually have a high proportion of young people, and if there is no outlet for their energies, the estate may suffer. Old people too need some clubroom conveniently near at hand.

131. *If suitable accommodation is not available in the immediate neighbourhood of a new estate, the housing authority should consider the provision at least of a clubroom or small hall.* Even if more elaborate provision is intended at some later stage in the development of an estate, it is still most desirable to provide a temporary meeting place for the use of tenants during the early days. The smaller friendly clubrooms, which cater for small groups and can be let cheaply, are more likely to be successful initially, and are perhaps of greater importance at this stage than larger halls. Where an estate is surrounded by other housing, it is not desirable that clubrooms provided by the council should be confined entirely to the tenants on the estate.

132. Some authorities have preferred, instead of providing clubrooms, to place sites and in some cases materials at the disposal of tenants wishing to erect clubrooms themselves through voluntary effort. On new estates, it is probable that it will be a considerable time before tenants are able to finance any new building themselves, since most of them are faced initially with many additional expenses and can only make small contributions. In spite therefore of the advantages of encouraging people to provide for their own needs, it is generally better for the local authority itself to provide the accommodation and some simple furnishing, leaving it to the tenants to raise funds for any extra equipment they desire, and perhaps eventually for enlargement. It has sometimes been possible to preserve on an estate an existing building in which accommodation may be rented by local societies.

133. When the housing authority provides a clubroom on an estate it is generally let to an officially organised body representative of the tenants, who thus accept

responsibility for its use and for raising funds to pay for rent, light, heating and cleaning. It is important to ensure that the clubroom is let to an association which is by its constitution non-party and non-sectarian, so that all tenants may feel free to enjoy the use of the room. The housing manager is normally responsible for arranging this letting and for maintenance, which may include internal decoration. The tenants themselves should be responsible for the management of the rooms, and while housing managers are often associated with the tenants' committees in the initial stages it is usually only in an advisory capacity. It is not the duty of a housing manager to initiate social activities, though he should be prepared to give help and advice if it is sought.

CHAPTER 10

Recruitment and Training of Staff

134. The basic functions of management are:

advice at the planning stage on estate layout and house design,
administration of the waiting list,
letting the houses,
transfers and exchanges,
rent collection and advice on rent schemes,
maintenance and repairs, including responsibility for the operation of special services, e.g. central heating, lifts,
general care of estates and their amenities,
housing welfare and liaison with the statutory and voluntary social services.

These functions require some knowledge of housing and property law, housing finance and estate accounts, building construction and methods and materials used in maintenance, local government administration and an understanding of the social services provided by the community. Whoever is responsible for controlling the work must combine administrative and business acumen with judgment and understanding.

135. A housing manager responsible for all the functions of management must combine a wide variety of technical skills with administrative ability. His senior assistants need an equal range of technical knowledge. The extent to which other members of the housing management department need specialised skills will depend upon the organisation of the work, and the requirements of the locality. Where the work is divided among specialised sections, the staff in each section need not necessarily be experienced in the full range of the work. Where the total staff is small, it is likely that most members are required to deal with all aspects of the work undertaken by the department. There is, however, a certain amount of routine and clerical work which does not demand a special study of housing management.

136. Efficient management of housing estates of the size and value of those now owned by local authorities cannot be achieved without trained and qualified staff. As a career, housing management might be expected to appeal to people with varying interests, and those who enjoy the combination of technical and social skills which it demands. The professional bodies, however, which provide an examination qualification for housing managers report a shortage of candidates. This should be a matter of great concern to local authorities, since it must in time have very serious effects upon the management of their estates.

137. Housing management suffers from the keen competition for young people which affects many professions. The professional associations submitting evidence suggested that additional reasons for lack of entrants are the lack of recognition of housing management as a worth-while career, and the fact that salaries are regarded as unattractive. *We trust that this report will be sufficient indication of the value of the work of housing management, and the part housing managers play in an important branch of local administration.*

138. Recruitment in this, as in other fields, does not depend solely on salary scales and promotion prospects, but at least as much on the scope and interest of the work, and the recognition of its worth both within the local government field and by the wider public. If housing management is carried out with a full sense of responsibility both for the well-being of individual tenants and for the property as a local and national asset, then housing managers will not fail to gain the support of the elected representatives and the respect of their colleagues. Housing management is a very important part of the work of local authorities; it should attract men and women of initiative and ability who are prepared to undertake the necessary training to obtain full professional qualifications.

139. There is a variety of examinations leading to a qualification in housing management. In addition to the degrees in estate management obtainable at Cambridge and London, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors and the Institute of Housing both examine in housing management. Largely as a result of the recommendation in the 1938 Report that managers of large estates should hold a university degree in estate management or the full qualification of a professional body examining in the subject, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors have introduced the housing management section of their professional examinations, the syllabus of which is specially designed to prepare the holder for every aspect of housing management. Candidates for the final examination must have completed four years approved training. In addition, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors hold examinations for a housing manager's certificate, which is about equal in standard to the intermediate of their full professional examination, and is specially designed for those who do not aim at a full professional qualification. The Institute of Housing have held examinations in housing management since 1938, and the syllabus both for their intermediate and their final examinations has recently been revised. The Society of Housing Managers do not hold examinations of their own but their training is linked with the examinations of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. Students accepted for training by the Society must prepare either for the full professional examination or for the housing manager's certificate of the Royal Institution, or for a degree in estate management. Examinations in housing management are thus available at different levels, providing qualifications both for those who aspire to the higher posts of management and also for those who are to manage smaller estates or fill posts of less responsibility.

140. The importance of linking a sound practical training with study for an examination is recognised by the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Society of Housing Managers and the Institute of Housing. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors lay down detailed requirements as to the duties in which candidates for their examinations must be receiving practical training. These include all aspects of day-to-day management and also a thorough insight into its administrative background, and the Royal Institution satisfy themselves in each case that proper practical training is available. The Society of Housing Managers provide

practical training under their members in offices where experience is given in all aspects of the work. The Institute of Housing require the candidate to be in the employment of a housing authority and engaged wholly or mainly on housing management duties. Subsequent election to membership of the Institute depends on the completion of prescribed periods of housing management experience.

141. Local authorities can do much to maintain high standards of housing management in the future by helping those members of their own staffs who are working for a qualification to get practical experience in all branches of the work. It is realised that where more than one department is responsible for housing management this requires arrangements for the transfer of trainees to other departments, but authorities would gain from the eventual employment of fully qualified housing assistants.

142. Although a number of local authorities take into their housing departments one or two trainees who benefit from in-service training while preparing for an examination, comprehensive training schemes designed for housing managers are few. Our attention was drawn to training schemes provided by two county boroughs, both of which offer training over a period of five years in all branches of the work. Practical experience is combined in both cases with evening classes at technical colleges. In one case four trainees are appointed annually, and in the other a total of ten trainees are accepted. We consider that much more could and should be done in this direction and that local authorities should look forward to future needs. *We therefore recommend the provision by the larger authorities of carefully devised training schemes, offering places each year for a fixed number of students, as a valuable contribution to housing management.* Training schemes should be so organised as to allow the student time for study and attendance at day or evening classes. In any case, authorities should make the fullest use of the national scheme of financial assistance for those prepared to work for recognised examinations.

143. Although it is hoped that there will be an ever increasing number of trained people employed in housing management, it cannot be expected that all members of a housing department will be either willing or able to obtain a professional qualification, nor indeed is it necessary that all should do so. Much of the work will continue to be done, and often very well done, by hard-working, experienced staff who have grown up in the job but who have not had the opportunity or inclination to take a qualification. All should, however, receive as much in-service training as is needed to fit them for the work on which they are engaged. The evidence we have received suggests that many authorities make no provision for the practical training of their housing management staff, and this is a matter which we suggest deserves fuller consideration. Those who have no examination in view may yet have their interest stimulated or the quality of their work improved by instruction from qualified members of the staff, or attendance at evening classes. *We suggest that local authorities in collaboration with the professional bodies should consider the possibility of providing practical training leading to an examination test for those workers who are unable to take a full professional qualification.*

144. The more unqualified staff there are the greater the responsibility on those who are qualified, and the more important it is to use the qualified staff to the best advantage. The need for careful selection and training of those who interview applicants and tenants should be borne in mind; it is important that they should be well informed and able to deal sympathetically and tactfully with the wide range of problems with which they are likely to be confronted. It is equally important to have

staff of good quality at the rent collecting level, and in appointing these it should be remembered that they must not only be skilled in handling cash but know how to deal with people. It is also desirable to make full use of the varying aptitudes of the staff by allotting to them the work for which they are best suited.

145. If the job of housing management is to be done as it should be, men and women of the right calibre must be attracted to the service. This is unlikely to happen unless housing management is given the place it deserves in local government. Authorities should therefore make sure that the status of housing management receives proper recognition in their administration and that the work itself is so organised as to offer interest, scope and opportunity.

* * *

146. In our report, we have laid stress on the value of local authority housing as a capital asset, and the importance of ensuring that like any other business asset it should be run with the maximum efficiency. But houses are a very special commodity and if a landlord-tenant relationship is to be wholly satisfactory, business efficiency by itself is not enough. Throughout our enquiry, we have been aware that good management depends on an active co-partnership between landlord and tenant. There must be a real understanding of human needs by the landlord and a willingness on the tenant's side to take his share as a responsible tenant and neighbour. By co-operating in this way, local authorities and their tenants can together create homes and estates of which both can be proud, and from which the nation can derive real benefit.

SUMMARY ON MAIN CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Management of local authority housing estates should be treated as an important business enterprise. (paragraph 4).

2. Methods of management must be continuously adjusted to meet changing social conditions, and should be examined critically from time to time. (paragraphs 5 to 7, and 11).

3. Elected members have an essential part in ensuring that management is equal to its extended responsibilities. (paragraph 10).

4. What is done at the planning and design stages must affect housing management fundamentally throughout the life of the estate; it is of great importance that the housing manager be brought in from the outset as one of the design team. (paragraphs 12, 48-50).

5. The term 'housing management' must be used in a sense wide enough to cover the care and well-being of an estate as a whole as well as of the individual dwellings. (paragraph 15).

6. Housing authorities are urged to examine their committee arrangements and to satisfy themselves that they are so devised as to ensure smooth and efficient administration. (paragraph 22).

7. Management should be the responsibility of a major committee. Except possibly in the case of the largest authorities, both the building and the management of housing estates should be brought under one committee. (paragraph 23).

8. This committee must watch not only the pattern of its administration but the cost. (paragraph 26).

9. There are manifest advantages in bringing the various functions of management under a single department. At the same time, some authorities have achieved efficient and well co-ordinated management without carrying out complete unification. Such authorities should carefully examine their housing management arrangements from time to time in order to make sure that their existing methods do, in fact, secure the benefits which are seen in unification in a single department. (paragraph 34).

10. Where a single department is considered impracticable there is a good deal to be said for grouping the functions of management under two main divisions, (1) 'personal' functions (covering applications and lettings, rent collection, receiving requests for repairs, and dealing with tenancy problems), (2) the 'structural' functions (covering the execution of repairs and maintenance of buildings, and the maintenance of the estate generally). (paragraph 36).

11. Any division of functions must, if it is to work satisfactorily, be clearly defined and accompanied by close and effective co-operation between the departments concerned. There should be one committee responsible for departmental co-ordination. (paragraph 37).

12. Some measure of decentralisation of management through local offices may be necessary in the case of authorities owning a number of large estates. (paragraph 40).

13. It is important to keep the needs of different estates under review so that the management service provided may be extended or modified to meet particular circumstances. (paragraph 41).

14. Administration may benefit by periodic review and overhaul; the services of organisation and methods specialists can be useful. (paragraph 42).

15. Management should be not only efficient but economical. Local practices in assessing the costs of management vary. There is an urgent need for an examination of methods of allocation of expenses. Housing accounts should be compiled on a more uniform basis. The apportionment of the costs of housing management should be included in any inquiry which is made into costing techniques. (paragraphs 43-46).

16. Housing is a field in which far more study of tenants' needs and reactions should be made. Both elected representatives and those responsible for management can provide much information on the preferences of tenants. It is important to study the reactions of tenants to the conditions of life in large blocks of flats. (paragraphs 47-51).

17. In planning the construction of new estates the initial capital cost is often the foremost consideration, but in the long run management and maintenance costs are just as important. (paragraph 54).

18. Maintenance records should be designed to provide information as to whether the materials, design and equipment of dwellings prove economical or expensive in maintenance. (paragraph 55).

19. Local authorities should ensure that selection from the housing list is based strictly on housing needs and that a sound method of assessment is adopted. (paragraph 56).

20. There are advantages in delegation to the housing manager of the responsibility for determining, within the framework of the council's selection policy, the order in which applicants are offered a house. (paragraph 57).

21. The handling of applications and the allocation of houses is part of the normal functions of a housing manager. (paragraph 58).

22. Periodic reviews of waiting lists are essential, and the practice of requiring applications to be renewed at stated intervals should be generally adopted. (paragraph 59).

23. Housing committees should regard the proper occupation of their houses as a matter of importance, and should require the officers responsible for management to make arrangements for the regular review of occupancy. (paragraph 63).

24. The combination of rent collection with other functions of management under the housing manager is desirable. Local authorities who do not do this should examine their present arrangements and satisfy themselves that, whilst they may be efficient and businesslike, they are not losing other less tangible but nevertheless important advantages. (paragraph 67). .

25. Where rent collectors are under the control of the treasurer, it is necessary to ensure the closest co-operation between them and the housing manager and his staff. (paragraph 68).

26. It is to the advantage of council and tenants alike to combine other duties with the work of rent collection. (paragraph 74).

27. Changes in the period and method of paying rent are indicative of changing social conditions. It is important, both from the point of view of economy and convenience to tenants, that housing authorities should ensure that their practices keep abreast of developments. (paragraph 76).

28. Fortnightly rent collection should be encouraged; the longer term aim should be to win the tenants to co-operate in the payment of rent at longer intervals or by cheque or order. The possibility of rent being paid through post offices or equivalent agencies might be considered. (paragraphs 80 and 81).

29. There are advantages in the introduction of a system of 'rent free' weeks. (paragraph 82).

30. Each local authority should review regularly the state of its housing repairs account and ensure that the amount paid in annually is sufficient to enable their dwellings to be kept in sound condition and to build up an adequate reserve. (paragraph 86).

31. Thorough inspection of all council properties should be carried out at intervals of three to five years. (paragraph 87).

32. Local authorities who have not made their tenants responsible for internal decorations and minor internal repairs should consider doing so. (paragraphs 89-91).

33. Where responsibility for maintenance and repairs is divided between the housing manager and the surveyor there should be the fullest co-operation between the two. (paragraph 93).

34. Where the housing manager is not in charge of a works department he should be responsible for the co-ordination of requests for day-to-day repairs, for recommending their priority, for indenting on the surveyor for work to be done, and for following np to see that it is properly done in reasonable time. (paragraph 94).

35. Local authorities should study the findings of the proposed research by the Royal Institute of Public Administration into the operation of housing maintenance. (paragraph 98).

36. An inquiry is recommended into costing techniques for housing maintenance, with a view to the issue of a costing manual. (paragraph 99).

37. The standard of maintenance of the surroundings of the houses should be as high as that aimed at in the upkeep of the houses themselves. (paragraph 100).

38. Where more than one committee or department is concerned with out-door maintenance there should be arrangements at committee level for co-ordinating the work. (paragraph 102).

39. Provision of garages and parking space on existing and future housing estates is a subject which would repay separate and special study. (paragraphs 104 and 105).

40. Local authorities should review their conditions of tenancy and see that they are clear and up-to-date. The provision of a tenants handbook is recommended. (paragraphs 110 and 111).

41. Local authorities should supply their tenants with information similar to that shown on the rate demand notes sent to other ratepayers. (paragraph 112).

42. Local authorities should treat tenants' associations as responsible bodies and make a point of winning their co-operation. (paragraph 116).

43. Where tenants are known to need the help of welfare agencies the housing manager should seek the help of the appropriate service at once. Local authorities, though interested in the general well-being of their tenants, should avoid duplication with any of the social services available for the population as a whole. Housing managers should have a place on the local Co-ordinating Committees. (paragraphs 119 and 120).

44. For most authorities it will usually be best to combine housing welfare work with other management duties, rather than employ special housing welfare officers. (paragraph 125).

45. Prompt action to prevent arrears of rent from accumulating is essential. (paragraph 126).

46. The housing authority should consider the provision of at least a clubroom or other building for social activities on estates where such accommodation is not available in the immediate neighbourhood. (paragraph 131).

47. Efficient management cannot be achieved without trained and qualified staff; there is need for attracting men and women who are prepared to undertake the necessary training to obtain full professional qualifications. (paragraphs 136-138).

48. The provision by more authorities of carefully devised training schemes providing places each year for a fixed number of students would make a valuable contribution to housing management. (paragraph 142).

49. In-service training is needed to fit all staff for the work on which they are engaged; it is suggested that local authorities, in conjunction with the professional associations, should consider the possibility of providing practical training leading to an examination test for those workers who are unable to take a full professional qualification. (paragraph 143).

* * *

We desire at the conclusion of this report to express our warm appreciation of the services rendered by our Secretaries, Mr. K. Lightfoot and Miss M. Empson. They have worked hard and tirelessly on our behalf and their knowledge and grasp of the subject have greatly facilitated our task.

(*Signed*) Stella Reading (*Chairman*)
A. D. Boyd
A. F. Bradbeer
Ronald Bradbury
Paul S. Cadbury
P. L. Leigh-Breese
K. Marr-Johnson
D. C. Marsh
A. H. Marshall
Parker Morris
A. R. Nobes
H. M. Pattinson
F. Sargent

M. Empson
K. Lightfoot
(*Joint Secretaries*)

9th February, 1959

APPENDIX

List of Local Authorities, Organisations and Individuals who have Submitted Evidence

County Councils and County Borough Councils
- †London
- Cardiff
- Carlisle
- Exeter
- *Huddersfield
- *Leeds
- Manchester
- Newcastle upon Tyne
- Walsall
- *Worcester

Boroughs and Metropolitan Boroughs
- Bacup
- Basingstoke
- *Bedford
- Bethnal Green
- Camberwell
- Jarrow
- Kensington
- King's Lynn
- Middleton
- Scarborough
- Stockton-on-Tees
- Swindon
- Tamworth
- Taunton
- *Wednesbury
- New Windsor
- Wood Green

Urban District Councils
- Abram
- Bishops Stortford
- Bridgend
- Carlton
- Chester-le-Street
- Crediton
- Esher
- Havant and Waterloo
- Pontypool
- Pontypridd
- Redditch
- *Trowbridge
- Wigston

Rural District Councils
- Atcham
- Blackwell
- Brecknock
- Bridport
- Clare
- East Elloe
- Eton
- *Gloucester

- Hexham
- Isle of Wight
- Lunesdale
- Petersfield
- Sturminster
- Valley
- *Wellington (Salop.)

New Town Development Corporations
- Aycliffe
- Crawley
- Harlow

Organisations
- †Association of Children's Officers
- †Association of Directors of Welfare Services
- Association of Public Health Inspectors
- †County Welfare Officers Society
- Family Service Units
- Highgate Tenants Association
- Housing Centre Trust
- †Institute of Housing
- †Institute of Municipal Treasurers and Accountants
- †London Council of Social Service
- †London Standing Conference of Housing Estate Community Groups
- Metropolitan Association of Chief Housing Officers and Architects
- †Metropolitan Boroughs' Organisation and Methods Committee

†National Assistance Board
†National Federation of Community Associations
National Federation of Housing Societies
National Old People's Welfare Council
†Oak's Lane Residents Association
Peabody Donation Trust
†Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors
Rural District Councils Association
†Society of Housing Managers
Society of Medical Officers of Health
Sutton Dwellings Trust
Town and Country Planning Association
Women's Voluntary Service
†Woodberry Down Estate Community Club

Individuals
Mr. S. W. A. Cook
Mr. A. Elkington
Mr. G. Finsberg
Dr. J. C. Spencer
Mr. A. E. Stanbridge
Mr. R. Wilson
Mr. P. T. Wright

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† Authorities and organisations from whom oral evidence was received.
* Authorities visited.

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